

Translation Theories Exemplified

from Cicero to Pierre Bourdieu

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System Theories

Introduction

System theories, such as **Polysystem theory**, **Manipulation theory** and **Norm theory**, have focused almost exclusively on literary translation.

They have moved the study of translations out of a static linguistic analysis of **shifts** (cf. Catford 1965) and **equivalents** (Nida 1964 and Nida and Taber 1969) towards the “**investigation of the position of translated literature as a whole in the historical and literary systems of the target culture**” (Munday 2008: 122).

Polysystem theory

In 1978, Polysystem theory was first introduced by the Israeli scholar Itamar Even-Zohar in ***Papers in Historical Poetics***. The main contribution of the theory was the concept of **system**.

Polysystem theory holds that a literary system, covering various types of literary works, functions under a variety of social constraints.

Even-Zohar distinguishes between two forms in literature:

- 1- **'high' or 'cannonized'** forms (such as poetry) and
- 2- **'low' or 'non-cannonized'** forms (such as children's literature, thrillers and translated literature).

Despite his position of low forms of literary systems, Polysystem theory claims that it is important to take into account “the so called 'low' forms as well as 'high' forms in dealing with the literature of any nation” (Hatim 2001: 67).

According to the Ploysystem theory, translation achieves primary position in terms of playing an innovative role in the target culture:

- A) when a literature is '**young**', in the process of being established;
- B) when a literature is either '**peripheral**' or '**weak**', or both;
- C) when there are **turning points**, **crises**, or **literary vacuums** in a literature

(for more details, see Even-Zohar 1978b: 192-197).

Even-Zohar argues that if the translation, for one of the above reasons, occupies a primary position, translators do not stick to the target-language literature models, thus producing **an accurate and adequate TT, i.e., text-/author-oriented**

Whereas, when translation is secondary in the system, translators “tend to use existing target-culture models for the TT”, thereby producing **an acceptable and readable TT, i.e., a domesticated TT** to borrow Venuti’s (1995) term (Munday 2001/2008: 109; see also the relationships between cultures Chapter 5 and equivalence-based theories Chapter 2).

Norm theory (normative approach)

- ◉ Toury and Hermans were the first to seriously bring the concept of **norm** to the fore in translation studies.
- ◉ **Norms** therefore are “social regulation mechanisms which make certain choices and decisions by the translator more likely than others” (Hermans 1998: 156).
- ◉ **Norms** will normally tell you what's correct and what is not, what's adequate and what's not (Toury (1980: 51).

Toury's three norms

Preliminary norms

They refer to **translation policy** (i.e. the factors that determine the selection of the ST for translation) and **directness of translation** (whether the translation is directly from the SL or through another language).

Initial norms

= in **your global strategy** you either pay attention to the norms of the SL, guaranteeing the **adequacy (i.e. accuracy)** or pay attention to the norms of the TT, achieving the **acceptability** of the ST in the TL.

Operational norms

= they refer to your **local strategies** taken by you as a translator to sort out a particular problem, such as omission, addition, manipulation, etc.

Chesterman's four norms

Expectancy norm

It refers to TL **grammaticality**, **acceptability**, **appropriateness** in a certain text type = taking into account your reader's expectations

Relation norm

The relationship between ST elements and TT elements = **accuracy** (strong relation) + **acceptability** (weak relation)

Accountability norm

It refers to **the ethics of translation**, i.e. the translator should make sure of tricky points and confusing matters by double checking the draft.

Communication norm

It refers to the communicative maxims proposed by Grice (1975), such as: **quantity**, **quality**, **relevance** and **manner**.

Manipulation theory

Working within the field of **descriptive translation studies** (DTS), a group of scholars from Belgium, the Netherlands and Israel introduced **Manipulation theory**.

Like other system theories, **Manipulation theory** is associated with a particular approach to the translation of literature; what has become known as the 'Manipulation School' or the 'Descriptive, Empirical or Systemic School' (Hermans 1995: 217).)

Proponents of this theory argue that the ST is sometimes manipulated through the nexus of translation for a certain purpose, thus bringing the TT in line with a particular model in hopes of **securing social acceptance in the target culture** (Hermans 1985: 11).

What's the difference between the ideological approach and manipulation theory?

To do so:

- a) translators, in particular literary translators, need to pay special attention to the linguistic and stylistic norms of the TL.
- b) Their approach to literary translation is “descriptive, target-organized, functional and systemic”.
- c) Their methodology was based on a search for translational “norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations”.

Acceptance / reader-oriented

Unlike **linguistic theories** that view translation as a **science** (for more details, see Chapter Three), **Manipulation theory** views translation as an art that allows translators to superimpose certain directionality on the text, bringing it in line with the poetics of translation.

To put this differently, according to **Manipulation theory**, the translation process is seen as a **rewriting process** in which the translator has the right to manipulate the TT wording in an attempt to make it acceptable in and appealing to the target language and culture.

The end ...



Thanks a lot